

FRENCH INDO-CHINA

one generation, been swamped in the rising tide of individualism. At first the Annamites were horrified by the outbursts of feeling to which the French gave vent, and even more by the self-analysis and cult of sensibility inherent in French culture. The classic drama, for example, to the Annamites did not mean moderation and reason, but the exaltation of the emotions. As is natural with emotional adolescence, the Annamites have developed sentimentality, a love of rant and bombast, and of the sensational. In political reading they love the fiery passages of Rousseau, An investigation of sales in Tonkin bookshops shows a love for French romantic writers, ranging from Dumas to Victor Mar-guerite, and of detective stories. The modern sentimental Chinese novel also has great success with the Annamites, and it has created for them an unreal and fantastic world. Even the poor buy books entitled *On the Ocean of Love* and *Where, Then, Is Thy Promise?* To counteract this rush of sentimentality to the heart the government has subsidized translations of the soberer Western classics.

The utilitarian aspect of the Annamites' interest in education is partly the result of being cut off from Chinese classics and partly the desire to profit by the new opportunities. When the missionaries invented and propagated *quoc ngu* they were trying to burn Annam's bridges with Confucianism in order to leave a virginal mind, ready to receive the imprint of Christianity. By destroying respect for the traditional authority they unloosed—much to their surprise—a critical spirit which was no more docile to Catholic than to Chinese doctrine. *Quoc ngu* became the symbolic bridge over which the Annamites have passed from the old to the new. It is an instrument by which the native who has perse-

verance and a textbook may acquire literacy and a
 veneer of Occidental-
 ism within a few months, but it is not a subtle
 medium for thought.
 Some natives have not been willing to make even this
 small effort.
 When in 1906 *quoc ngu* schools were opened the
 Annamites at first
 co-operated eagerly, thinking that it meant the
 beginning of a new era
 of wealth. But the lack of immediate advantages—
 always in terms of
 government jobs—as well as the necessity of paying the
 teacher, soon
 chilled their enthusiasm so that few pupils were left.
 Those who persevered and rose in the world felt that there was nothing
 left for them to
 learn

The old type of Annamite scholar whose life was
 devoted to the
 pleasures of learning^ and who dreamed and
 discussed philosophy,
 agreeably lying on a mat in his garden, had been
 abolished to give place
 to an upstart go-getter* The old scholar was
 stagnant, complacent,